least a first filter layer and a second filter layer which are laminated with each other, said first filter layer being located at a side of the optical system and said second filter layer being located at a side of said photoelectric converter;

a stage formed at least at a portion of an external circumference of the optical filter by varying a size of said first filter layer along a direction perpendicular to the optical axis from a size of said second filter layer along the direction perpendicular to the optical axis, wherein the size of said first filter layer is smaller than the size of said second filter layer and the portion of the external circumference of the optical filter which forms the stage includes a portion of a surface of the second filter layer that faces toward said first filter layer and extends in the direction perpendicular to the optical axis; and

the stage having a size that is sufficiently large so that the stage is capable of being utilized to hold the optical filter.

01 Cont

10. (Twice Amended) An optical filter according to claim 2, wherein:

02 said second filter layer is composed of a material stronger than a strength of a material of said first filter layer.

12. (Amended) An optical filter according to claim 2, wherein:

03 said first filter layer is an infrared-cutting filter and said second filter layer is a ¼ λ plate.

13. (Twice Amended) An optical device comprising:

04 a photoelectric converter that converts a subject image formed at a light-receiving surface thereof to an electric signal;

an optical system that forms the subject image with a light flux from a subject at the light-receiving surface of said photoelectric converter;

an optical filter that is provided on an optical path between said photoelectric converter and said optical system to filter the light flux, the optical filter includes a plurality of filter layers that are laminated along a direction of an optical axis of the light flux that

passes through the optical filter, the plurality of filter layers including at least a first filter layer and a second filter layer which are laminated with each other, a size of said first filter layer being smaller than a size of said second filter layer along at least one direction perpendicular to the optical axis so that a stepped portion is formed at least at a portion of an external circumference of the optical filter, the stepped portion having a size that is sufficiently large so that the stepped portion is capable of being utilized to hold the optical filter;

a holding member that engages a portion of an external circumference of the second filter layer that extends in the direction perpendicular to the optical axis and is located in the stepped portion, so that the holding member holds the optical filter; and

said holding member has a spring property and holds said optical filter by pressing said optical filter either toward said photoelectric converter or toward said optical system.

17. (Amended) An optical device comprising:

a photoelectric converter that converts a subject image formed at a light-receiving surface thereof to an electric signal;

an optical system that forms the subject image with a light flux from a subject at the light-receiving surface of said photoelectric converter;

an optical filter that is provided on an optical path between said photoelectric converter and said optical system to filter the light flux, the optical filter includes a plurality of filter layers that are laminated along a direction of an optical axis of the light flux that passes through the optical filter, the plurality of filter layers including at least a first filter layer and a second filter layer which are laminated with each other, said first filter layer being located at a side of the optical system and said second filter layer being located at a side of the photoelectric converter, a size of said first filter layer being smaller than a size of said second filter layer along at least one direction perpendicular to the optical axis so that a

stepped portion is formed at least at a portion of an external circumference of the optical filter, the stepped portion having a size that is sufficiently large so that the stepped portion is capable of being utilized to hold the optical filter; and

a holding member that engages a portion of an external circumference of the second filter layer that extends in the direction perpendicular to the optical axis and is located in the stepped portion, so that the holding member holds the optical filter.

18. (Amended) An optical device according to claim 17, wherein said first filter layer and said second filter layer are pasted to each other.

19. (Amended) An optical device according to claim 17, wherein said second filter layer is composed of a material stronger than a strength of a material of said first filter layer.

REMARKS

Claims 2, 8, 10, 12, 13 and 15-19 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 2, 10, 12, 13 and 17-19 are amended, and claims 7 and 14 are cancelled. The attached Appendix includes a marked-up copy of each rewritten claim (37 C.F.R. §1.121(c)(1)(ii)).

Independent claims 2 and 13 have been amended to even more clearly distinguish over the references of record. In addition, claim 17 has been rewritten in independent form, and further amended in a manner similar to independent claim 2. No new matter is added by the amendments.

Claims 2, 7, 8, 10 and 12-19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,069,651 to Tsuyuki et al in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,078,442 to Tada et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claims 2 and 17 recite, *inter alia*, that an optical filter has at least a first filter layer and a second filter layer, with the first filter layer being smaller than the second filter layer, and the first filter layer being located at a side of the optical system, with the second filter layer being located at a side of the photoelectric converter. In addition, the difference between the sizes of the first and second filter layers forms a stage that is